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ABSTRACT

The use of reflective leadership among school principals is examined in this paper to develop a framework for the process of reflective decision making, with a focus on administrators' "strategic sense." Field notes and interviews with principals and their teachers were used to identify leadership roles and principals' perceptions of those roles. Different uses of educational innovations have led to the concept of "change facilitator style," which is composed of three different leadership styles: responders, initiators, and managers. "Strategic sense," a dynamic, ongoing self-examination that connects daily situations to long-term goals, was identified as a characteristic of initiators, the more effective principals. Differences in orientation and perspective were closely linked to antecedent and subsequent actions taken, and different intervention behaviors correlated highly with teachers' success in implementing curriculum innovations. A bipolar scale to measure strategic sense for inclusion in a change facilitator questionnaire and a two-dimensional framework of the reflection process based on perspective and orientation were developed. Three figures are included. (33 references) (LMI)

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STRATEGIC SENSE: THE KEY TO REFLECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOL PRINCIPALS[1]

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The concepts of reflection and reflective teaching have emerged as central focii of research on teaching. Increasing attention is being given to the development of reflection in teachers, especially in pre-service teacher education programs. Although it has not been a central emphasis for research or training in other educational roles, clearly the phenomenon occurs, in some form, with school principals, district office staff developers, school superintendent, teacher education faculty and yes, administrators in higher education. The role group that is the focus in this paper is the principal.

There are parallel findings in recent studies in the United States, Belgium and Australia about the intervention behaviors of school principals. Their actions as leaders have been documented and descriptions have been developed of particular leadership "styles" that in key ways closely parallel the descriptions of reflective teachers. Some principals closely examine their roles as instructional leaders, critique their intervention behaviors and assess their actions in ways that are very consistent with the descriptions of teachers processing their own teaching.

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Out of the extensive field notes and interviews of principals and their teachers we have developed descriptions of some different ways principals approach their leadership role and think about what they are doing. The thrust of much of the research has been upon examining the role of the school principal in facilitating teachers' use of educational innovations, which has led to the concept of Change Facilitator Style. Three Change Facilitator Styles have been described in detail and found to be closely related to teacher success in implementing educational innovations. The work suggests a different criteria for judging principal effectiveness i.e. teacher implementation success rather than student achievement.

A key characteristic that distinguishes more effective principals from less effective principals has been named Strategic Sense. More effective principals think differently about their role and they define their role in special ways. There are direct linkages between their analyses of their day-to-day interventions and their thoughts about long-term goals and visions. There is a dynamic ongoing self examining of their facilitating activities that sets them apart from more typical and less effective principals.

In this paper, the background field work that has led to the development of the concept of Strategic Sense is described briefly. The concept of Strategic Sense is described and related to the literature on reflection. Then a framework for thinking about different levels or types of reflection that have been observed in school principals is introduced. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of implications of the concept of Strategic Sense, the proposed framework and research on the principalship.

STUDIES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

During the last ten years, there have been a number of intensive studies of school principals. In many ways these studies parallel the extensive array of studies of teachers and teaching. Although the studies of principals are more limited in quantity, there is a consistency in findings across studies that cannot be ignored. This is especially true in terms of studies of elementary school principals.

A very useful review of the findings was developed by Leithwood and Montgomery, (1982), In their review, they summarize the findings of comparisons between "typical" principals and more effective principals. Consistent differences were found across the studies with more effective principals doing more things and with more frequency.

The study of Venezky and Wynn (1979) supports this general pattern of behaviors as well. Further, in the effective schools literature (see for example Edmonds, (1979); and Brookover, (1982), descriptions of the role and approach that

principals use includes similar characteristics to the more effective principals in the Leithwood and Montgomery review.

In some studies there have been systematic attempts to distinguish different overall patterns to leadership that principals employ. For example, Thomas (1978) identified a definite relationship between the principals use of one of three leadership approaches styles and school success and effectiveness.

More recently, my colleagues and I have conducted a series of studies in the United States, Belgium and Australia where we have gradually developed operational descriptions for three different Change Facilitator Styles (Initiator, Manager and Responder). Each CF style represents a composite description of one particular approach that school principals were observed to use in facilitating teachers implementation of new curricula. In these studies, we have carefully documented the intervention behaviors (Hall & Hord, 1984) that the principals have used and developed composite descriptions of these three styles. In addition, an array of indicators have been identified that summarize each style and offer descriptive evidence for distinguishing each. (Hall, Rutherford, Hord & Huling-Austin, 1984).

In one major year long study, it was observed that there was a high and significant correlation (r=.76) between the Change Facilitator (CF) Style that the principal used and teacher's success in implementing curriculum innovations. It was clear in the quantitative data, as well as in the qualitative data, that principals using the different CF styles worked very differently in facilitating the change processes that unfolded in their schools. A clear and direct consequence was that teachers had varying degrees of ease and success in implementing the new curriculum practices that was associated with the CF style the principal employed (Hulling, Hall, Hord & Rutherford, 1983). Descriptions of the three Change Facilitator Styles are provided in Figure 1.

The pattern of relationships between the Change Facilitator Style that the principal used and the degree of implementation success was increasingly positive as one moves from the Responder, to the Manager and on to the Initiator CF Style. In subsequent studies it has been consistently observed that the Initiator and Manager style principals have schools that are more successful in implementation and have more positive climates (Vandenberghe, 1987; Van der Perre, 1984; Schiller, 1988). In each study the Responder style principal's schools have been ranked a distant third.

EMERGENCE OF THE CONCEPT OF STRATEGIC SENSE

A Key feature of the designs in our studies of principals as change facilitators has been maintaining constant touch with

the study principals. The work has entailed in-depth year long studies of school principals as they have been involved in facilitating change and school improvement efforts. A combination of on site observations and interviews and biweekly telephone interviews were used to identify and document principal interventions. In these types of studies there are many formal and informal opportunities to develop impressions and descriptions that go beyond the primary study mission of collecting descriptions of innovation related interventions. In doing this field work, it has become increasingly apparent that Initiator style principals think about their role in very different ways then do Manager and Responder style principals. In discussions with my colleagues here in the U.S. and with Roland Vandenberghe in Belgium, it seems that we are finding the same types of patterns and differences in our study principals.

It appears that Responder style principals are primarily attuned to the moment-to-moment and day-to-day events within their school. While the Initiator style principals are fully cognizant of the day-to-day events they keep fully in mind the long-term vision and goals they have for the school. A part of their longer term vision is an image of the ideal state that the principal and staff are striving towards. This dynamic is part of the often heard description of principals of effective schools when there is discussion of their having a vision and "visioning". This type of longer term imaging and maintaining of a targeted direction was not observed in the Responder style principals.

Manager style principals seem to hold more of a middle level picture and image that can best be described as task oriented and tactical in nature. There also is a tendency on the part of Manager style principals to become preoccupied with, and at the same time satisfied with, accomplishing administrative and organizational tasks with dispatch and efficiency. Initiator style principal see these as a means to a greater end, rather than the end in and of themselves.

The Responder style principal, on the other hand, appears to be consumed in attending to the moment through persistent monitoring of the perceptions and feelings of staff, community and central office personnel. They do not have time, or take time, to develop and sustain a longer term image. They focus on those issues and items that are at hand.

This set of observations and related inferences has led to our proposing the concept of Strategic Sense (Hall, 1988; Vandenberghe, 1988) to describe the dynamic imaging and pro-active planning that we have regularly observed in Initiator style principals. There is a continual "noodling around" that is observed and heard with these principals. In the midst of our interviews and discussions with Initiator style principals they report on their thinking about recent intervention actions, such as a conversation with a teacher. They critique their

actions in terms of how they went, what should have been done, what was accomplished and what they should do next.

They keep in mind an image of the long-term view and its relationship to the monthly, weekly and daily activities of themselves and their school. There is a linking of thought about actions and a linking of actions with the Initiator style principal chaining together their interventions in a deliberate and knowing way. As a consequence the individual conversations, sending of memos, telephone calls, etc. add up into tactics and ultimately strategies for accomplishing the longer term goals. A part of this thinking, or "reflection", is a self examination of the rightness, wrongness and appropriateness of what they are doing.

Initiator style principals seem to be driven in many ways to attain their vision. Working toward the vision is the priority. It is based on what they see as being best for student learning and the school as a whole. At the same time, in their self critiques of the steps they have taken, they have moments of remorse for the feelings of teachers that have been hurt and wonderments about whether or not they are doing the "right" thing. Yet the longer term vision and school priorities provide an overriding absoluteness to their images of where they are heading that pushes them on, rather then their becoming paralyzed with uncertainties.

It is this dynamic of processing of interventions and analysis of their role in facilitating their school improvement efforts that led Roland Vandenberghe and myself to the label Strategic Sense. The dynamics of this process are doubly impressive in comparison to the more day-to-day perspective of Responder style principals. Responder style principals appear to over invest their psychic energy in their analyses of what's going on right now. Yet there seems to be grid lock in relation to their thinking about next actions. As a result, even simple interventions are delayed and they make fewer interventions in total. This seems to come about through a clash of trying to make sure they have sufficient information about the staffs feelings and perceptions with the need to select a course of action which will be acceptable to all. The result is wheel spinning through the investment of extra time in surveying and pulsing others to find out what they perceive. This need to continue pulsing delays acting. When action finally is taken it tends to be in more responsive, and in some instances reactive, ways. There tends to be a failure to recognize and anticipate the interconnectedness of one action with antecedent and subsequent actions. In other words, the strategic perspective is missing.

STRATEGIC SENSE DEFINED

In our present research, Roland Vandenberghe and I are developing a measure for assessing the Change Facilitator Style

of school principals. We are doing concurrent cross culture studies (Hall, 1988; Vandenberghe, 1988). The measure is designed for teachers to complete and is based on a three dimensional framework for describing the different Change Facilitator Styles that principals can have. One of these dimensions is the dimension of Strategic Sense. The formal definition of the concept of Strategic Sense is presented in Figure 2.

The concept of Strategic Sense as a dimension runs along a bipolar continuum that ranges from having a "day-to-day" focus to a "vision and planning" focus. It is being hypothesized that a principal using the Responder style will weight toward the day-to-day end and the Initiator style more toward the vision and planning end.

Although there has been discussion on the parts of many, especially the contingency based leadership theorist, that a leader can change his/her style, (Fiedler, 1967; Hersey and Blanchard, 1982), it is our hunch, at this time, that the Change Facilitator Style of the school principal does not change that easily. However, we will be able to put this to the empirical test in the next year or so as the Change Facilitator Style measure takes shape.

For our purposes here, the working definition of Strategic Sense with its bipolar scaling underlines the framework for the development of the CFS questionnaire. It also provides the schema for analyzing the reflective dynamic we are observing in principals. It appears that the idea of Strategic Sense and the way that this is carried out in the Initiator style principals is consistent with the definitions of reflection that are being identified with teachers.

REFLECTION ABOUT RESEARCH ON REFLECTION

It is the definition of reflection in the literature that I would like to address next. The emerging definitions of reflection appear to be problematic, in terms of what we presently understand from our studies of principals. After a brief highlighting of the issue, I would like to propose a framework for thinking about reflection that takes into account our studies of principals as change facilitators.

Studying reflection in teachers has become a heavy emphasis in the last half of the 1980's among teaching researchers and teacher education researchers. It is encouraging to note so many teacher education researchers examining how to develop the skills of reflection in beginning teachers. Also, it is encouraging to note that the teaching researchers appear to be coming to some agreements about the definition of reflection and inferred dimensions of the processes.

At the same time, it appears as if there are some unnecessary restrictions and limits being placed on the concept. If so, this will retard development of robust applications of the concept in teaching and teacher education, as well as principal education. In some ways, the concept of reflection is not as new as is being suggested, since Dewey (1933) is often cited as a pioneer in teacher thoughts. However, now there are more analogies and structures for grappling with the phenomenon. For example, in their recent work (Peterson, P. L., Fennema, E., and Carpenter, T. P. 1987, April), suggest that cognition and meta cognition models can be applied to the learner and the teacher. Different knowledge is being developed and used in each case, however the processes are similar.

A parallel set of work is emerging in critical theory e.g. (Ross and Hannay, 1986) and clinical supervision (E. G. Garman, 1986). Underlining some of these works is the earlier work on cognitive interest and perspective (Mezirow, 1981).

Mezirow drawing on the work of Habermas (1971) suggests that there are three different areas of cognitive interest: "work", "practical" and "emancipatory". Mezirow implies that the third area, emancipatory is the state of self reflection that represents the highest level of attainment. Mezirow suggests that in achieving this state a series of "perspective transformations" occur as one moves into adulthood. Mezirow observed this mode of learning in a study of older women reentering college programs. In this work, Mezirow identified a series of elements to the dynamic of perspective transformation. These elements are:

1. A disorienting dilemma.
2. Self examination.
3. A critical assessment of personally internalized role assumptions and a sense of alienation from traditional social expectations.
4. Relating one's discontent to similar experiences of others or to public issues--recognizing that one's problem is shared and not exclusively a private matter.
5. Exploring options for new ways of acting.
6. Building competence, self confidence in new roles.
7. Planning a course of action.
8. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans.
9. Provisional efforts to try new roles and to assess feedback.
10. A re-integration into society and the basis of conditions dictated by the new perspective.

(Mezirow, J. 1981. A critical theory of adult learning and education. Adult Education, Vol. 32, No. 1. p. 7).

My reason for highlighting Mezirow's list is that it encompasses many of the elements and the dynamics of a process that are addressed in discussions of reflection.

One of the implication of this work, for me, is that reflection and the development of reflective skills should be seen more as a developmental process, rather than a peek state, that is attained via some sort of miraculous epoch. For the reflective principal, as well as for the reflective teacher, there are probably a set of identifiable elements that go into the processing act. Once identified, these elements could become the content for training. Mastery of these elements will need to be viewed in a developmental frame, however. And there must be lower state, levels or qualities of reflection, rather than it being a dichotomous phenomena (i.e. either you got it, or you haven't).

A related risk in much of the present work is the over emphasis upon the thought processing that goes on in the person (is this meta cognition?) without attending to the actions that occur in follow-up to the processing. This over emphasis runs the risk of sidetracking the reflector, as well as the researcher or trainer, from the larger picture of having a reality check by attending to the character of the subsequent actions. Unless clear and consistent relationships are inferred between the antecedent conditions and actions and post reflection actions then our models and studies will be cursed with unaccounted for variances.

In a recent paper, Bruckerhoff, (1987) proposed a framework for addressing the problem. Using Polanyi's (1983) concept of post-critical thought, Bruckerhoff suggests that we should be thinking about the development of knowledge in three spheres: Thought, which is explicit knowledge, Critical Thought, which is inquiry, and Post-critical thought, which is related to social, historical human activity. In other words, our models and studies of reflection, need to go beyond the intensive examination of the meta cognitive processes that are going on in the person (i.e. critical thought) and more closely examine the linkages between antecedent behaviors and subsequent behaviors (i.e. post critical thought). The ultimate test of the level and intensity, as well as the validity, of the reflective processes can be observed in the validity of subsequent actions. Paying closer attention to the prior and subsequent action parts of the equation are particularly important in our field of professional education. The actions teachers and principals take do make (and do not take) a difference.

Another reason for raising this issue is my impression that the processes we are talking about under the label of reflection do not occur singly in the Initiator style principal. The Manager style principal and the Responder style principal have thought processes. And they appear to involve many of the same types of mental steps and elements as those outlined by Mezirow and in other the models of reflective teaching. Although there

is mental processing by Responder and Manager style principals, the subsequent actions are different in frequency and character from those observed with Initiator style principals. The antecedent behaviors and subsequent actions are not as coherent, linear and chained (see Bridges, 1988) or as systemic, which suggest that elements of the process are incomplete, missed or replaced with others. It is not a simple presence or absence of thought that distinguishes the CF styles in debriefing Responder and Manager style principals, it appears that many of the same features are addressed, but the weighting, or priority, given to them is different in the decision making process.

If these hypotheses are at all valid, then it should be possible to differentiate the mental approaches being taken by education professionals in terms of the steps in processing, elements being considered and their weightings. Out of this set of equations, paths for potential development could be charted and training sequenced appropriately. If there are critical junctures where perspective transformations occur these could be identified and targeted.

It is this set of ideas, based on clinical observations of principals on the firing line and from reviewing the literature, that have led me to propose a tentative framework for thinking about and distinguishing some different dimensions and elements within the overall frame that is loosely called reflection. This framework is proposed next.

PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR STRATEGIC SENSE/REFLECTION

In order to distinguish the different qualities to reflection that have been observed with principals using different facilitator styles and to take into account some of the dimensions that have emerged in other studies, I am proposing here a two dimensional framework, (see Figure 3). The objective is to incorporate what we are learning about the dynamics of reflection, especially as it relates to the role of school principals in facilitating change, and a way of taking into account some of the observed variants in the qualities and emphases to the reflective act that are characteristic of different facilitator styles.

One set of information that needs to be taken into account deals with the dynamics of reflection. Within this, a distinction must be made between the process of reflecting and the content that the reflection is about. It is being assumed in this discussion that the content for reflection is the role of leadership in facilitating change. Analyzing ones interventions, client needs and possible next steps for improving the school are the contents. Other professional and non professional items could be the content of reflection. However these would be more appropriately dealt with in other sociological, pedagogical and psychological frames.

What has been reported by principals indicates that the emphases that are given to different contents and the processing perspective employed vary dramatically across Change Facilitator Styles. Yet some elements of the processing are similar. For example, there is reconstruction of past events, there is a critiquing of what took place, there is a projecting of the intents of others and, to some extent, an exploration of future courses of action. The primary differences in processing across CF styles seems to be be based in the degree of distortion and the time frame that serves as the boundary for reflection.

This leads to the possibility of viewing the reflection process along two dimensions: One is Perspective and the other is Orientation. Along the Perspective dimension is the scale of Strategic Sense which ranges from "day-to-day", to "tactical", to "vision" and planning. The Orientation dimension moves from a focus on "self", to "task", to a focus on "others".

Those that are familiar with concerns theory (Fuller, 1969; Hall and Hord, 1987) will recognize its influence in the Orientation dimension. The orientation one takes to interpreting his/her environment can be heavily influenced by perceptions of implications for ones self, or the work at hand, or consequences of the work for others (e.g. teachers or students). Depending on ones orientation the thought processing will be filtered with varying degrees of bias.

The interplay of the Orientation and Perspective dimensions at the intersection is where the process of reflection is occurring. By having a two dimensional framework, it is possible to describe at the different possible intersections the different qualities and emphases that have been inferred in our study principals.

At the upper right hand intersection, the true and powerful Reflective process that was observed in Initiator style principals can be found. At the lower left intersection a very different dynamic is at work, Refraction. Just as light rays are bent when they enter a different medium, reflection about past events and actions are shaped by the amount of bending that ones Orientation and Perception bring to the interprative process. The processing that is going on at the Refraction intersection entails a day-to-day perspective with a heavy orientation on implications and effects for ones self. This short-term and self oriented processing frequently results in inaccurate and distorted interpretations of events, the intentions of others, and an imbalance in processing of content -- i.e. refraction.

When this framework is used as a heuristic, other images can be envisioned. For example, somewhere between the Refraction and the Reflective ends is a middle ground of Reflecting. In this zone, information comes in, is processed and returns to the outer world in accurate ways. The perspective is tactical with the smaller pieces of action being

tied together. But, the accumulation into the larger long term, more strategic view, is not considered as strongly. Other images can be developed in thinking about intersections that are off the diagonal.

In conclusion, this is a brief proposal for a working framework to address some of the richer variations that are being detected in our work with school principals. It appears that principals are using elements of the reflection process. They are analyzing, monitoring, thinking about their acts and deeds and projecting next steps. What seems to vary in principals using different CF styles is the quality and quantity of these acts, which can be distinguished in terms of Perspective and Orientation.

When the reflection process is viewed across time (i.e. Perspective) and in terms of Orientation then it will be possible to link together the processes of reflection with the antecedent acts (e.g. interventions) and the subsequent actions. In this way, I am suggesting a framework that might bring about a merger of the more metaphysical aspects of cognition with the behavioral aspects of the roles of educational professionals. Without linking our research to professional practice, we are short shifting our profession and reducing the potential power of our studies.

DISCUSSION

In this paper, I have reported on the findings from research on school principals and their role in facilitating change. Three different facilitator styles, the Initiator, Manager and Responder, were summarized. One of the qualitative findings from the studies has been that the Initiator style principals exhibit more of the idealized characteristics of reflection. Yet the Manager and the Responder style principals appear to incorporate many of the mental elements of the process. Further, there are some clear differences in Orientation and Perspective that can be closely linked to the "antecedent" and "subsequent" actions that each takes. . These differences in intervention behavior are highly correlated with the success that teachers have in implementation of curriculum innovations.

An organizing framework has been proposed to address the qualitative differences that have been observed in the reflective processes and contents the different style principals use. One recommendation is that researchers, as well as educators, think more about the post-reflection actions and not concentrate solely on the dynamics of the reflective act through identification of elements of the thought process and training for the process.

Further, it appears that much of what we are talking about in reflection is paralleled in other fields of study. For

example, Sprinthall, (1980); Hunt (1988); and Heath (1977) talk about psychological maturity and conceptual levels. It appears that many of the characteristics of the high conceptual level adult are the same as those my colleagues and I have observed in Initiator style principals and others are findings with reflective teachers.

Another parallel has to do with training attempts. There appears to be a consistent finding that developing higher level psychological maturity in persons of lower levels is not easy or quick (Sprinthall, 1979). This finding is being paralleled in the recent efforts to develop more reflective teachers. As much as we do not want to say it, it may be that we will have to focus more on the selection of persons for leadership position who have reflective qualities already, or in some ways that are identifiable have the potential to develop these qualities quickly. Trying to train in these qualities with nominal candidates may be asking too much of our present understandings.

It may be that Mezirow's idea of perspective transformations is a useful one for us to consider Perhaps, if we were to type persons as being refractors or reflectors prior to training, we could then differentiate our training. Then we would view becoming reflective as being a developmental process. Achieving proficiency in reflection would be accomplished through a series of "perspective transformations" as one moves from being reflective to reflective.

Clearly there are a number of elements in the process. It may well be that there are also a series of stages and phases in developing skill in doing the process, which include shifts in orientation and perspective. If this indeed is the case, then it may mean that our training and development programs have to be extended in time, more diagnostic and more developmental.

The process of reflection is important, especially as it is related to antecedent and post-reflection actions in professionals, principals who have more Strategic Sense also have the other types of attributes that are being asked for in educational leaders. Yes we need to know more about the dynamics of their reflections. We also need to know more about the inter-relationships of their prior and subsequent actions and the effect of their actions on developing good schools. Good thoughts without actions will do little to continue school improvement.

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Figure 1. Descriptions of Three Change Facilitator Styles

Initiators have clear, decisive long-range policies and goals that transcend but include implementation of the current innovation. They tend to have very strong beliefs about what good schools and teaching should be like and work intensely to attain this vision. Decisions are made in relation to their goals for the school and in terms of what they believe to be best for students, which is based on current knowledge of classroom practice. Initiators have strong expectations for students, teachers and themselves. They convey and monitor these expectations through frequent contacts with teachers and clear explication of how the school is to operate and how teachers are to teach. When they feel it is in the best interest of their school, particularly the students, Initiators will seek changes in district programs or policies or they will reinterpret them to suit the needs of the school. Initiators will be adamant but not unkind, they solicit input from staff and then decisions are made in terms of the goals of the school, even if some are ruffled by their directness and high expectations.

Managers represent a broader range of behaviors. They demonstrate both responsive behaviors in answer to situations or people and they also initiate actions in support of the change effort. The variations in their behavior seem to be linked to their rapport with teachers and central office staff as well as how well they understand and buy into a particular change effort. Managers work without fanfare to provide basic support to facilitate teachers' use of an innovation. They keep teachers informed about decisions and are sensitive to teacher needs. They will defend their teachers from what are perceived as excessive demands. When they learn that the central office wants something to happen in their school they then become very involved with their teachers in making it happen. Yet, they do not typically initiate attempts to move beyond the basics of what is imposed.

Responders place heavy emphasis on allowing teachers and others the opportunity to take the lead. They believe their primary role is to maintain a smooth running school by focusing on traditional administrative tasks, keeping teachers content and treating students well. They view teachers as strong professionals who are able to carry out their instructional role with little guidance. Responders emphasize the personal side of their relationships with teachers and others. Before they make decisions they often give everyone an opportunity to have input so as to weigh their feelings or to allow others to make the decision. A related characteristic is the tendency toward making decisions in terms of immediate circumstances rather than in terms of longer range instructional or school goals. This seems to be due in part to their desire to please others and in part to their more limited vision of how their school and staff should change in the future.

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Figure 2. Working Definition of Strategic Sense

DIMENSION III. STRATEGIC SENSE

To varying degrees principals keep in mind an image of the long term view and its relationship to the monthly, weekly and daily activities of themselves and their school. Some principals are more "now" focused, while others think and act with a vivid mental image of how todays actions contribute to accomplishing long term goals. Some are reflective about what they are doing and how all of their activity can add up, while others focus on the moment to moment, treating each event in isolation from its part in the grand scheme. This visioning encompanies the entry and role of external facilitators too. In some settings external facilitators can enter schools as they wish, while in other settings the principal encourages/discourages their entry and prescribes their role.

Day to Day

At this end of the dimension there is little anticipation of future developments and needs or possible successes/failures. Interventions are made in response to issues and needs as they arise. Knowledge of the details of use of the innovation is limited and the amount of intervening is restricted to responding to questions and gradually completing routine steps. Images of how things could be better and how more rapid movement could be made to gain these ends are incomplete, limited in scope and lack imagination. Structures and solutions are devised "on the spot" as needs arise. These are done with little adjustment or anticipation of longer term patterns, trends or consequences. External facilitators come and go as they wish and spend extraordinary effort in advising the principal.

Vision and Planning

The orientation of this pole is that of having a long term vision that is integrated with an understanding of how the day to day activities are the means that accumulate toward the desired end. There is an intensity to the facilitating activity, with a high degree of interaction that is related to the work at hand. Teachers and others are pushed to accomplish all that they can. Assertive leadership, continual monitoring, commitment to action, and creative interpretations of policy and uses of resources to accomplish longer term goals are clear indicators of this end of the dimension. Also present is the ability to anticipate the possible systematic effects of interventions and the longer term consequences of day to day actions. Effects are accurately predicted and interventions are made in anticipation of likely trends. Interactions with staff and external facilitators are centered on the work at hand.

The focus is on tasks, accomplishing school objectives and making continued progress. External facilitators are encouraged/discouraged to be involved in the school according to the principal's perception of the areas of expertise and worth.

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Vandenberghe, R. (1988). Development of a framework and measure for assessing principal change facilitator style (in Dutch). Katholieke Universiteit. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

FIGURE 3.

A FRAMEWORK FOR VIEWING REFLECTION
AS A DEVELOPMENTAL PHENOMENON